



October 2004

zoom

in on america

A Monthly Publication of the USA Mission to Poland. Warsaw • Krakow • Poznan

Volume I. Issue 8.

EDUCATION in the USA



The United States does not have a national school system. Nor, with the exception of the military academies, are there schools run by the federal government. But the government provides guidance and funding for federal educational programs in which both public and private schools take part, and the U.S. Department of Education oversees these programs.

In America, a college is an institution of higher learning that offers courses in related subjects. A **liberal arts college**, for example, offers courses in literature, languages, history, philosophy, and the sciences, while a business college offers courses in accounting, investment, and marketing. Many colleges are independent and award **bachelor's degrees** to those completing a program of instruction that typically takes four years. But colleges can also be components of universities. A large university typically comprises several colleges, graduate programs in various fields, one or more professional schools (for example, a law school or a medical school), and one or more research facilities. (Americans often use the word "**college**" as shorthand for either a college or a university.)

Almost 90 percent of American students under 18 years of age attend public elementary and secondary schools, which do not charge **tuition** but rely on local and state taxes for funding. Traditionally, elementary school includes kindergarten through the eighth grade. In some places, however, **elementary school** ends after the sixth grade, and students attend middle school, or **junior high school**, from grades seven through nine. Similarly, secondary school, or high school, traditionally comprises grades nine through twelve, but in some places begins at the tenth grade.

Most of the students who do not attend public elementary and secondary schools attend private schools, for which their families pay tuition. Four out of five private schools are run by religious groups. In these schools religious instruction is part of the **curriculum**, which also includes the traditional academic courses. (Religious instruction is not allowed in public schools). There is also a small but growing number of parents who educate their children themselves, a practice known as **home schooling**.

Every state has its own university, and some states operate large networks of colleges and universities. Some cities also have their own public universities. In many areas, junior or community colleges provide a bridge between secondary school and four-year colleges for some students. In junior colleges, students can generally complete their first two years of college courses at low cost and remain close to home.

Unlike public elementary and secondary schools, public colleges and universities usually charge tuition.

The texts on this page come from the Department of Education site: <http://www.ed.gov/index.jhtml>

In This Issue: Types of Schools, Study in the United States, Linguistic Activities, and Win a Book!

Types of Schools

Public schools

Regular public schools are organized and structured according to the policies and regulations of the local school district and state in which they operate.

Private Schools

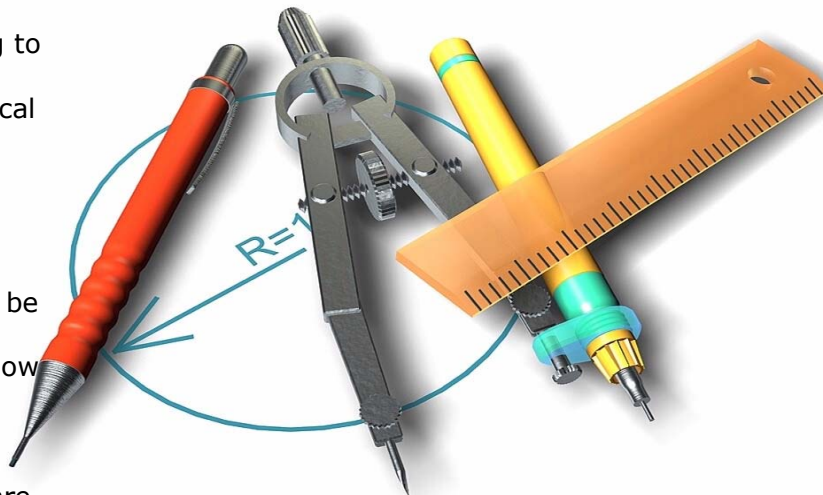
Private schools may be either religious or secular and they follow a wide variety of curricular and pedagogical approaches. There are also private schools that specialize in serving special needs students.

Charter Schools

Charter schools are public schools that have been turned over to local parent and community groups, who receive a charter making them responsible for the operation and success of the enterprise. To read more about charter schools please go to

<http://www.ed.gov/programs/charter/contacts.html>

source: <http://www.ed.gov/>



To search for schools go to :

[American Schools Directory \(ASD\)](http://www.asd.com) provides a comprehensive searchable database of links to public and private schools of different types and levels.

www.asd.com

[Web 66](http://web66.colled.umn.edu/) provides links to schools participating in Web 66, a national effort to link schools to each other through the Internet. <http://web66.colled.umn.edu/>

Community Colleges

Community colleges provide the first two years of a university education. Students are able to transfer to a university for an additional two years to complete the Bachelor's Degree. This system is called "2+2." These institutions are an important sector of the U.S. higher education system. There are nearly 1,200 accredited community colleges with an enrollment of 11 million students.

Increasing numbers of international students are choosing to begin their higher

education in the U.S. at community colleges. During the past decade, the growth of international students attending U.S. community colleges increased by 57 percent.

To read more about Community Colleges in the U.S. please go to the Electronic Journal: Community Colleges in the United States <http://usinfo.state.gov/journals/itsv/0602/ijse/ijse0602.htm>

Ivy League

The **Ivy League** is an association of eight Northeastern American universities. The term "Ivy League" has connotations of academic excellence as well as a certain amount of elitism. These schools are also sometimes affectionately referred to as the Ancient Eight.

All of the Ivy League universities share some general characteristics: They are among the most prestigious and selective universities in the U.S.; they rank within the top one percent of the world's universities in terms of financial endowment; and they attract top-tier students and faculty. The Ivies are also among the oldest universities in the United States—all but Cornell University were founded during America's colonial era.

All but one of the Ivy League universities are privately owned and controlled, although many of them receive funding from the federal or state governments to pursue research. One of the eight, Cornell, has four state-supported academic units, termed statutory colleges, that are an integral part of the university.

Brown University
www.brown.edu



Columbia University
www.columbia.edu



Cornell University
www.cornell.edu



Dartmouth College
www.dartmouth.edu



Harvard University
www.harvard.edu/



University of Pennsylvania
www.upenn.edu



Princeton University
www.princeton.edu



Yale University
www.yale.edu



SOURCE: <http://www.wordiq.com/>

FUN FACTS

* 30% of U.S. 15-year-olds agree or strongly agree that reading is a favorite hobby, a lower percentage than the OECD average. Percentages ranged from 62% in Mexico to 24% in Norway according to PISA 2000. ([NCES Reference](http://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/data/pisa2000/))

* Female 15-year-olds outperformed male 15-year-olds in reading literacy in every participating country, including the United States, according to results from PISA 2000. ([NCES Reference](http://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/data/pisa2000/))

* In 1999, the U.S. was one of 16 out of 38 nations in which 8th-grade boys outperformed 8th-grade girls in science. ([NCES Reference](http://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/data/pisa2000/))

* 75% of public schools had a website in 2001. ([NCES Reference](http://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/data/pisa2000/))

<http://nces.ed.gov>

■ If you want to study in the US?

Applying to study in the United States is not a simple process, but there are good resources available to help you understand what to do. The United States government provides education information centers in nearly every country, and there are also extensive Internet resources. Most U.S. higher education institutions and many schools operate their own web sites.

It is very important for you to contact the closest U.S. Overseas Educational Advising Office as you make your plans.

About 2000 Polish students study in the U.S. each year. The Embassy promotes academic exchange between the U.S. and Poland through the **U.S.-Polish Fulbright Commission** <http://www.fulbright.edu.pl/> and **Educational Advising Office** <http://www.usinfo.pl/krakow/studyus.htm>, by helping link Polish and American universities, and by providing an **Educational Advising Service** <http://www.fulbright.edu.pl/study1.html>

to help Polish students navigate the application and financial aid process in American universities. Polish citizens interested in studying in the United States should contact Ms. Ola Augustyniak, Educational Advisor at the U.S.-Polish Fulbright Commission located at Nowy Swiat 4 (Tel. +48-22/625-6978) or Majka Brzostek, Educational Assistant at the U.S. Consulate General in Krakow ul. Stolarska 9 (tel. +48-12/424-5140)

■ EDUCATIONAL ADVISING OFFICE

The United States Consulate General in Krakow maintains an Educational Advising Center that provides services to Polish citizens interested in university and graduate study in the U.S. The Center has a large collection of up-to-date catalogs and guides, in print and electronic formats, with information on the American system of higher education and the programs of various universities. It includes information on the admissions process, necessary documentation and fees, and required standardized tests (TOEFL, SAT, GRE)

LINKS:

students.gov, your comprehensive information portal providing answers to your questions on education, career, government and more

to find U.S. universities:

<http://www.clas.ufl.edu/CLAS/american-universities.html>

■ Financial Assistance

The United States government does not provide student assistance to non-citizens except in the limited case of federal exchange programs and some research opportunities for scientists and mid-career professionals. Students who come to the United States to study for diplomas or degrees are expected to be able to pay for their study visits using their own resources plus assistance from their countries or private sources.

The SmartStudent Guide to Studying in the USA: Financial Aid for International Students

Designed for international students the site includes how to calculate college costs, a financial planning worksheet, sources of financial aid, scholarship information and much more. <http://www.edupass.org/finaid/>

Federal Student Aid: International Students

Information to help the international student who wishes to study in the United States, from the U.S. Department of Education Federal Student Aid (FSA).

<http://studentaid.ed.gov/PORTALSWebApp/students/english/intl.jsp>

Paying for School: Financial Aid

Detailed information on where to go to find financial aid for international students with links to sites with additional information. Includes information on work/study programs. http://www.foreignborn.com/study_in_us/8-paying4school.htm

Check this out



Activity Page

Win a Book!

To take part in a drawing for one of three English-language books find the answer to the following question:
Does United States have a national school system?

Send your answer to:
zoom@usinfo.pl

Give your name, address, and age. The deadline is October 30.

Good Luck!

The winners from the previous issue will soon receive their prizes by mail.

■ Educational Definitions

The U.S. school system listed below is different from the rest of the world and can create confusion when compared to the Polish system. Please match the components of the U.S. school system with its definition

Kindergarten	■ first year student in either high school or college
Elementary School	■ a preschool for children age 4 to 6 to prepare them for elementary school
Middle School	■ an institution of higher learning that grants the bachelor's degree in liberal arts or science or both
High School	■ second student in either high school or college
College	■ a school for the first six to eight years of a child's formal education, often including kindergarten
Graduate Degree	■ a degree from a University or College, also known as a Bachelor's Degree
Freshman	■ an academic degree such as MA or PhD conferred by a college or university upon those who complete at least one year of prescribed study beyond the bachelor's degree
Sophomore	■ third year student in either high school or college
Junior	■ fourth year student in either high school or college
Senior	■ a secondary school that usually includes grades 9 or 10 through 12
Undergraduate Degree	■ a school at a level between elementary and high school, typically including grades seven through nine

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American Information Resource Centers

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Ambasada USA
ul. Piękna 14, 00-540
Warszawa
airc_warsaw@state.gov

Krakow
Konsulat Generalny USA
ul. Stolarska 9, 31-043
Krakow
KrakowAIRC@state.gov

Glossary

Explanation of 8 difficult words in this issue:

tuition— fee, money paid for instructions
elementary school - The first six to eight years of a child's formal education, also called **grade school**, **grammar school**, **primary school**
junior high school - a school generally including the seventh, eighth, and sometimes ninth grades
curriculum - all the courses of study offered by an educational institution
home schooling— being educated at home
liberal arts - academic disciplines, such as languages, literature, history, philosophy, mathematics, and science,
bachelor's degree - a title earned by students upon completion of a college or university
college— an institution of higher learning

■ Differences Between Institutions

High school and college are different institutions that have different meanings. Please match the correct words that describe each institution. (some words may apply to both)

Teacher, Professor, Principal, Dean, Bachelor's of Arts, Bachelor's of Science, University, Undergraduate, Major, SAT's, Freshman, Senior, Resume, GPA, Minor, Classroom, Graduation,

College: _____

High School: _____
